

Extra Housepit Excavation 11 Excavation Results

Mike Rousseau

Location and Description

Extra Housepit Excavation 11 intersected the western half of a small circular cultural depression measuring ca. 3.5 m diameter by 0.4 m deep. It was the northernmost of three similar features located immediately southwest of Housepit 26 in the south-central part of the main site area (Vol. III, Preface, **Fig. 1**). The southern rim of the depression was not well defined and was lower than that of the northern edge of the pit feature. Nevertheless, the surficial appearance of the depression was typical of that observed for several other cachepits tested during the "cachepit" program.

Three conjoining excavation squares measuring 3 m north-south by 0.75 m east-west were excavated in the western half of the feature forming a trench measuring 3.0 m north-south by 0.75 m east-west. They were designated as Squares A, B, and C from north to south. The eastern walls intersected the approximate center of the surficial depression.

Excavations were undertaken to determine the function and age of this depression and the nature of its fill. It was selected because it was not in direct association with a housepit rim, and because it had the surficial characteristics of a typical "cachepit" feature.

The squares were dug in 10 cm thick arbitrary levels using trowels and 1/4" mesh screening. Proveniences were referenced below ground surface. Ten distinctive stratigraphic layers were identified in the excavations (**Fig. 1**).

Stratigraphy

Stratum I

Stratum I extended from about 0-10 cm below surface in the eastern edges of Squares A and B, and between 0-5 cm elsewhere. It is a moderately loose, light gray brown (10 YR 4/2) silt with some sand (5%) and small pebbles (5%). It represents recent slopewash and aeolian deposits. Slopewashing into the depression feature was most prominent from the northwest corner of the depression, with less along the western edge of the squares. This pattern was noted also in the underlying strata.

Stratum II

Stratum II lay between about 7-20 cm below surface, and was thicker in the eastern edges of the squares. It was somewhat lenticular in cross-section and was divided into two sub-strata.

Stratum IIa

Stratum IIa was a compact, light gray (10 YR 5/2) sandy silt with 10% pea gravel and 5% small pebbles. It occupied only the northern two-thirds of Square A.

Stratum IIb

Stratum IIb is virtually identical in content to Stratum IIa, but is dark gray (10 YR 3/1) in color. Cultural materials included a biface fragment from Square A at 18 cm below surface, and a small side-notched Kamloops horizon point from the central portion of Square C at 12 cm below surface near the bottom of Stratum IIb. Stratum IIb contained Stratum X deposits,

which are interpreted to be the remains of a small lenticular hearth feature occupying the western and central aspects of the excavation squares between ca. 6-18 cm below surface (see Stratum X below). Other cultural materials from Stratum IIb included a moderate density of lithic waste flakes, scattered charcoal flecks and chunks, some fire cracked rock, and some fish and mammal bone. No cultural materials were observed with the ashy hearth represented by Stratum X. It was screened separately and yielded only charcoal. It is for this reason that it is interpreted to be a hearth rather than an ash/refuse dumping episode.

Stratum IIa and IIb appear to have been deposited primarily by natural agency during the Kamloops horizon. Casual discard of items into the depression probably also occurred during this deposition. However, the hearth feature represented as Stratum X at the bottom of Stratum IIb suggests that a fire had been lit in the pit prior to the natural infilling and casual discard represented in Stratum IIb.

Stratum III

Stratum III was represented in Square A between about 20-35 cm below surface. It was a moderately compact, light gray brown (10 YR 4/2) sandy silt with moderate (30%) pea gravel and low (20%) small pebble frequency. It is interpreted to represent intensive slopewash and/or slumping from the northeast, where the slope rises steeply.

Stratum IV

Stratum IV occupied the southern half of Square A, all of Square B, and the northern half of Square C. It lay about 20-30 cm below surface. It was a semi-compact, dark gray black (10 YR 2/1) sandy silt with high (40%) pea

gravel content and 30% small pebbles. Cultural materials included: a Kamloops point from the southwest corner of Square A at 37 cm below surface; a red "pipestone" (steatite) pendant and a large core fragment from Square B, and; a ground bone tool from the southern edge of this stratum in Square C at 25 cm below surface. This stratum is interpreted as representing the use of this depression as a small single-person dwelling, or possibly a small storage structure where non-perishable goods, combustibles, and possibly food were kept. The nature of the artifacts and cultural remains suggests it functioned as a small single-person dwelling; the stratigraphy indicates that it would have been only about two meters in diameter and it lacked any indication of a hearth. Other cultural materials include a few pieces of fire-cracked rock, scattered charcoal, and fish and mammal bone. A flotation sample was taken from the southern edge of this stratum.

Stratum V

Stratum V was located in the northern half of Square A between about 25 cm to 35 cm below surface. It was a moderately compact, light gray brown (10 YR 5/3) sandy silt with moderate (25%) amount of small pebbles. Very little cultural material was associated with this matrix, and it is interpreted to represent slopewash (primarily) from the steep slope to the immediate east.

Stratum VI

Stratum VI occupied the northern half of Square A between ca. 50-65 cm below surface. It was a moderately compact, light gray (10 YR 6/2) sandy silt with high (45%) pea gravel content, moderate (20%) small pebble content, and some clay (10%). It represents primarily slopewash from the

steep slope to the east. It is contiguous with Stratum VII in the southern half of the unit.

Stratum VII

Stratum VII extended through the southern half of Square A and through Squares B and C between 30-40 cm below surface in Squares A and B, and 10-40 cm below surface in Square C. It was a moderately compact, medium gray brown (10 YR 5/2) silty sand with high (45%) pea gravel content and some scattered charcoal bits and chunks. It contained a moderate amount of flakes, moderate amounts of mammal bone, and salmon bones. The significance of this stratum is not altogether clear, however, it may be primarily slopewash from the east mixed with cultural materials from adjacent activity areas. It does not appear to represent any intentional use of the depression.

Stratum VIII

Stratum VIII was contiguous throughout the southern half of Square A, throughout Squares B and C, and continued further south beyond the excavation block. It was a moderately compact, dark gray (10 YR 3/1) sandy silt with moderate pea gravel (30%) content and a moderate (25%) amount of small pebbles. This stratum had a high organic content, particularly with respect to charcoal. A moderate amount of lithics, including a biface fragment and a moderate amount of mammal and fish bone, were recovered. This stratum represents the initial construction and use of the pit feature, and again appears to represent the floor zone of a small single-person dwelling, or perhaps a structure used to store mostly non-perishable and perishable goods and combustibles.

Stratum IX

Stratum IX was a light yellow gray (10 YR 6/2) compact, clayey silt with high pea gravel (45%) and high (40%) small pebble and cobble content. It represents sterile glacial till deposits.

Stratum X

Stratum X was a lens of fairly loose, orange brown (10 YR 5/6) sandy ashy silt with low (10%) pea gravel content and moderate (20%) small pebble content. It represents a hearth feature associated with the bottom of Stratum IIb. No cultural material (other than charcoal) was associated with this hearth.

Summary and Conclusions

Excavations revealed that Extra Housepit Excavation 11 had intersected the western half of a small circular feature that appears to have functioned on at least two occasions as either a single-person dwelling and/or as a small storage structure measuring about 2.5 m in diameter and covering about 6.25 square meters of floor. The latter possibility seems most likely since both use-episodes lack any indication of hearths. The relative paucity of fire-broken rock and high incidence of other organic remains suggests that it was not a sweat lodge, and the horizontal occupation zones clearly indicate that it did not function as a storage pit.

Although no temporally diagnostic artifacts were recovered from the deposits associated with the initial use of the depression (Stratum VIII), it probably dates to the early or middle Kamloops phase. The second

occupation/use (Stratum IV) definitely dates to the Kamloops horizon, as indicated by two Kamloops side-notched points.

That such small storage structures existed at Keatley Creek seems probable. They would have been very useful for keeping wood and dogs dry, storing tools, and would also provide children with a play house. At least two more of these special-purpose features should be investigated to conclusively determine their function.

Figures

Figure 1: East and west wall profiles of EHPE 11, showing Squares A, B, and C.

Figure 1: East and West wall profiles of EHPE 11, Squares A, B, and C.

Stratum	Munsell		Description
I	10 YR 4/2	Light gray brown	Moderately loose, silt with some sand and 5% small pebbles.
IIa	10 YR 5/2	Light gray	Compact, sandy silt with 10% pea gravel and 5% small pebbles.
IIb	10 YR 3/1	Dark gray	Compact, sandy silt with 10% pea gravel and 5% small pebbles.
III	10 YR 4/2	Light gray brown	Moderately compact, sandy silt with 30% pea gravel and 20% small pebbles.
IV	10 YR 2/1	Dark gray black	Semi-compact, sandy silt with 50% small pebbles and 40% pea gravel.
V	10 YR 5/3	Light gray brown	Moderately compact, sandy silt with 25% pea gravel and 25% small pebbles.
VI	10 YR 6/2	Light gray	Moderately compact, sandy silt with 45% pea gravel, 20% small pebbles, and some clay.
VII	10 YR 5/2	Medium gray brown	Moderately compact, silty sand with 45% pea gravel, 30% small pebbles, and moderate charcoal content.
VIII	10 YR 3/1	Dark gray	Moderately compact, sandy silt with 30% pea gravel and 25% small pebbles.
IX	10 YR 6/2	Light yellow gray	Compact, clay-silt with 45% pea gravel and 40% small pebbles. Sterile.
X	10 YR 5/6	Light orange brown	Fairly loose, sandy ashy silt with 20% small pebbles and 10% pea gravel. Hearth feature.

Figure 1. East and west wall profiles of
 EHPE 11, showing Squares A, B, and C.

